

Preface

Originally designed for data exchange, the Internet is now an essential point of interest for all businesses. It is a flexible, interactive and an efficient platform for commerce and this allows generating and facilitating all business activities ranging from information search to transactions. Through increased commercial interactions, the Internet has developed and grown into an e-commerce platform which promises countless opportunities and is now considered to be the world's fastest expanding marketplace.

This rapid expansion is directly related to the widely held perception of e-commerce as the source of new business opportunities. Additionally, with increasing critical attention being paid to the digital economy, e-commerce helps with improving effectiveness and efficiency across all business activities. However, before businesses can fully benefit from e-commerce, they have to recognise the different threats deriving from e-commerce acceptance as it can have an impact, positive or negative, on all parties' stakeholders throughout the supply chain. The main commercial consideration should be whether businesses will achieve the desired competitive advantage while turning to the virtual marketplace or whether their acceptance of the e-commerce platform will achieve the desired competitive advantage or prove to be just a risky investment decision that can have major impacts that negatively impact on their current position in the market. This book offers answers to these questions by encompassing a collection of studies focusing on opportunities and threats deriving from e-commerce acceptance for the different stakeholders of all parties within the supply chain.

The book is divided into three main sections: Suppliers, Retailers and Consumers. In the first section, Suppliers, the application of e-commerce for Supply Chain Management in the food industry is discussed, where potential benefits of e-commerce, i.e. support for development of new markets, are mapped against risk deriving from application of e-business tools in this particular sector. Next, potential benefits and barriers of e-commerce acceptance for Supply Chain Management in a developing economy are evaluated and recommendations are made on how to overcome identified challenges in order to fully benefit from e-commerce technology. The section ends with a discussion of security concerns in cloud-enabled e-commerce in the Supply Chain Management.

The next section, Retailers, offers a review that examines the role of electronic reverse auctions in a business-to-business model and presents some propositions to

maximise its use as an effective e-purchasing tool. Further, this section presents a wide variety of pointers as to how e-commerce applications can be used to enhance the performance of businesses. The guidance given here is later compared and contrasted with challenges deriving from e-commerce activities and especially those related to brand management in a virtual environment.

The book concludes with the Consumer Section where culture-specific advantages of e-commerce are compared and contrasted with disadvantages deriving from e-commerce activities, i.e. lack of face-to-face contact and/or lack of possibility to physically touch and examine the product. The section ends by providing guidance for website development while keeping in mind multiple human factors.

We believe that a book structured in this way offers a balanced view on foreseeable and existing opportunities weighed against threats deriving from e-commerce acceptance within the various parties of the supply chain. We hope that through this 'holistic' lens on e-commerce, the platform can be effectively assessed as an attractive and realistic option, or as a compulsory development.

We thank all authors, reviewers and publishers for their efforts to make this project feasible.

E-commerce Platform Acceptance

Suppliers, Retailers, and Consumers

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